

Image construction of the Borderland
(between today's Hungary and Austria) in the Cold War period
/Final report/

The proposed research's aim was to analyze how the evaluation and representation role of the Hungarian borderland with Austria changed due to propaganda processes during the Cold War period. Even though this multi-faceted and complex territory is currently united into and protected as a national park as well as a world heritage site, it did not have a unified image or an effective network system of settlements before. The borderland experience with the immigrant routes that was constructed during the Cold War period froze together the area with different intensity due to the diverse political intentions of the time. After 1989 the transformation experienced an even more vivid turn, when this area of the country started to prosper rapidly both economically and as an environment protection and research center. More than a quarter century later it is very inspiring to collect and analyze the perception about the northwestern corner of the country in the Cold War period.

My research focused on how the outside norms could be adapted to the local cases and in what way they transformed the identity and power-presenting quality of the given place or settlement, also what interests and actors were participating in these processes. This complex research was targeted from three perspectives: to examine the territory; the relation to its past and the individuals (such as locals, political leaders, professionals, minorities and military population) including their parts and connections in the process of proposing and enforcing certain changes at the researched territory. There were three cumulative objectives of this research: to collect primary literature (including visuals and moving pictures as well) about the propagandistic image formation of the territory (by investigating for instance the records of the Film Studio of the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior section of OSA); to understand the nature of propaganda of the time: its characteristics and the effect on forming the notion of 'the other' (such as the people living in the surrounding countries (TK 420-2-2 (11)) and to analyze the transformation in the representational power of the chosen territory.

During the two-month fellowship I had the chance not just to study the primary materials, but also enjoyed the advantage of the rich library. The close readings of the archival sources, especially the materials of the Research Center of Mass Media, helped to understand the difficulties of how the meaning of the given territory was formulated in a top-down manner

during the researched more than three decades. I was able to identify certain events that modified the general public's notion of the territory, for instance the media coverage about the return of the Hungarian Crown (TK 420-1-1 (7)). This collection of materials, mainly public opinion polls and their evaluations, provided information also about the general conditions at that time (regarding for example the frequency and possibilities of taking journeys within the country as free time activities (TK 420-2-2 (5)) and about the notion of 'the other' (namely the German-speaking minority and its disappearance) (HU OSA 300-40-13 Box2)). With the help of the specialized library that matches in content focus to the archival materials I was able not just to learn more about the researched period and its perception (for instance with Geréb Sándor, Hajdú Pál: *Az ellenforradalom utóvédharca*), but also about possible research methodologies (such as in Molnár Adrienne: *A hatvanas évek emlékezete. Az Oral History Archívum gyűjteményéből*).

I could look through both films made by for instance the Hungarian Police Department, and still images of the Virtual Filmstrip Museum among others. At these cases visual analysis methodology helped me decoding the message by modifying the image for instance with emphasizing Soviet soldiers' tombs next to the oldest church in Sopron (Sopron 1955) or by under-representing certain areas and sights from the enumeration of the beauties of the country (*Helikopterrel Magyarország felett* 1962). Similarly short films about the life of the border guards did not mention any difficulty or problem in terms of their everyday life or the technical equipment they had to use (394 -0-1:16) even though we have contradictory information about these issues by today (Csendes Mihály: *A határőrség*). I found the strong emphasis on the cooperation of the guards, the "uncountable" volunteers and the general public (394-0-1:15) also stunning and started to look for data about the same topic in other sources (for instance the escape section of the biographical interview collections of the Voices of the 20th Century Archive).

I also had the chance to gain knowledge and insights from the regular consultations with colleagues of the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archive. Katalin Székely, my supervisor, Iván Székely, the expert among others of the history and materials of the Research Center of Mass Media and Csaba Szilágyi, who himself had been conducted empirical research on the same territory with focusing on the events of 1989 are just among the few outstanding and very helpful colleagues of the Archive. I truly believe that without those consultations my research period would have been much weaker. They shared their knowledge and experiences as well as recommended me further readings and other materials

to gain the most out of this research period. Moreover, they introduced me to other experts with whom I could further develop my studies and could network as well. I was also fortunate enough to get actively involved in the events at the Archive, such as the temporary exhibition of Politicized Landscape, which was theoretically and methodologically perfectly suitable for my own research. Even though the case study of the exhibition was the Bős-Nagymaros Dam that is situated outside of my defined research territory, but the adaptation and questionable result of a dam system, as well as the importance of environment protection were key issues in my research too. I participated on many events related to the exhibition such as lectures by Professor Tamara Steger and Alex Fischer, film screenings such as the *The Object* and guided tour as well as personal meeting with the exhibiting artist, Axel Braun.

As my intention was not to work for a narrative historical overview of the territory in the given time section, but to conduct a problem-oriented, interdisciplinary research, I looked for materials that were not descriptions of the territory but rather reports on its perception. Due to this complex and unusual focus of my research, collecting materials for research was not simple or linear. That is the reason why the results of researching the territory provided less fruitful or rather indirect results. This was the case with the public poll titled Sopron (TK 420-1-1 (19)), which included questions about the interviewee's notion and knowledge of the Austrians that led me to many important analysis such as Judit Lendvay's work on the cognitive dimensions and values in the evaluation of the neighboring countries and their people (TK 420 -2-2 (4)). Similarly polls conducted in the researched area like the one from 1984 titled Győr-Sopron (TK 420-1-1 (25)) included the question what do you like in the given settlement, which led me to continue my research to find out whether this area with its cultural and natural beauty was part of the national identity and pride (such as the complex report on the notion of patriotism, Hungarianness and internationalism in 1974 (TK420-2-2-(13)). Similarly I tried to decode what were the findings about Hungary's image in the contemporary foreign media (TK 420 -2-2 (4)) to crystalize my understanding further.

The perception or evaluation of the territory was also researched by looking at its significance for instance through its historical and cultural values. The fact that new hotels and recreational facilities or the contemporary use of the old structures are over-represented in the visual presentations provided me some hints. The two major historical events of the 20th century that can be connected to this territory are the intensive illegal migration out of the country around 1956 and the opening of the border in 1989. They are understandably not discussed heavily in the researched sources. The Bős-Nagymaros dam case on the other hand did directed the

general public's attention to the researched area (see the documentary by Ádám Csillag titled *Dunaszaurusz*). It raised the topic and relevance of environment protection (TK 420-2-2 (2)), which became an important factor later on regarding to Lake Fertő and its surroundings, and it could be connected to another similar case in Austria, the Hainburg dam (HU OSA 300-40-13 (Box2)). Another inter-related event that has been heavily discussed in the media, and, which, based on the polls, the general public was also aware of was the at the end unrealized project of organizing a World Expo with Austria. The interconnectedness of the two topics are justified also in the outcome of a poll realized in 1989 with the title *Dam and/or democracy?* (TK 420-2-2 (4)).

Later I focused my research question on the diverse, but related groups of individuals, to see how they saw and evaluated the co-occupied territory. For this comparative approach I identified the military people, the locals, the voice of the media (for instance Tibor Hanák's program on the Free Europe Radio) and the general public (via the public polls mainly) as separated groups. During my previous research, I got also familiar with the environment protectionists' and the monument protectionists' notion, which served as good basis for comparisons. It is important to note that the Hungarian monument protection system, the national institute network had already been established in the late 1950s, and almost 8 300 buildings/architectures were officially protected by the 1970s out of which the 65% percent were located in the researched area. The Hungarian scholars were seen as examples and forerunners of their time for the professional research, documentation and protection of vernacular architecture and traditions as well (HU OSA 300-60-1-443 (4)). Cultural, natural and scholarly cooperation with the Western countries as well as with other Socialist countries were both vivid and fruitful (HU OSA 300-8-3-13824). Such contradiction of the realized and successful heritage protection and the general public's lack of notion about these values alludes not only to the political leadership's more successful propaganda tools but also to the fact that the scholarly work could operate and prosper even if their findings did not always correlate to the central message.

By the end of the two-month research period I was able to collect useful primary literature, could decode some processes of the propagandistic effort and see the transformation of the chosen area. Naturally, there are numerous materials that are related and would be useful to my research and I intend to continue my study at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archive. I am planning to look through the materials about Hungary's relations to the West especially in the 1970s (HU OSA 300-2-5-49) and see whether my researched territory has

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any significance in it as a physical bridge or barrier. I aim to continuously look at the visual and audio-visual sources such as Magyarország 1945-1980 or Gábor Bódy and Péter Forgács' Private History to decode emphasis and possible symbols related to my territory. Similarly periodicals such as the Beszélő, the Fekete Doboz or the Hungarian Heritage Review might be useful for me. There are elements in the library that I plan to review as well such as the Landscapes of Communism or the A régi Magyarország képeslapokon. I also have the privilege to be able to get familiar with the materials of Europeana due to the Csaba Szilágyi's gracious offer. As a conclusion it can be said that the Visegrad scholarship at OSA was an outstanding opportunity and led to a major improvement in my research for which I am inexpressively thankful.

I analyzed the archived documents in the following archive boxes:

HU OSA 300-40-13 Box 2

HU OSA 420-1-1 Box 4, Box 7, Box 8, Box 11, Box 12, Box 13, Box 19, Box 21, Box 25,
Box 26, Box 35, Box 49, Box 52

HU OSA 420-2-2 Box 1, Box 2, Box 3, Box 4, Box 5, Box 6, Box 7, Box 8, Box 9, Box 11,
Box 12, Box 13, Box 14, Box 25

HU OSA 124-2-4 Box 12

HU OSA 318-0-7 Box 12

I researched movies and propagandistic videos in the following archive boxes:

HU OSA 394-0-1 VHS 14, VHS 15, VHS 16, VHS 32

I also looked through the materials of:

Virtual Filmstrip Museum

Police Photo Archive

Fortepan

Voices of the 20th century

From the library section I read:

Geréb Sándor, Hajdú Pál: Az ellenforradalom utóvédharca

Molnár Adrienne: A hatvanas évek emlékezete. Az Oral History Archívum gyűjteményéből

Apor Péter, Sarkisova, Oksana: Past for the eyes. East European representations of communism in cinema and museums after 1989

Rainer M. János: Hatvanas évek Magyarországon

R. Farkas Klára: Ez történt Vas megyében

Thiranagama, Sharika, Kelly, Tobias: Traitors. Suspicion, intimacy, and the ethics of state-building

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